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COMMISSIONER ADDRESSES EDUCATION/BUSINESS CONNECTIONS

Commissioner of Higher Education, Joseph Savoie stressed the importance of partnerships between education, government and business to foster economic development in Louisiana. The Commissioner, addressing the 64th Annual Conference of Louisiana Colleges and Universities, challenged everyone present to make a difference stating “for Louisiana to become competitive economically and socially, it will be dependent on the work that each of you do every day at your institutions.”

Savoie noted that the new economy is rapidly moving from a dependence on strong backs to a dependence on strong minds. “Colleges and universities are largely responsible for that transformation through research developed in campus laboratories,” Savoie stated citing examples such as the development of the hybrid plant, the origins of computers and genetic engineering.

The Commissioner noted that the challenge in Louisiana is to stop the trend of exportation. “Louisiana, in many ways, has been a colony - a place where others came and mined our resources and shipped them off to other places for other people to create wealth. In many ways, that is happening to us now with our intellectual resources. States are coming in and mining our minds. You see it in the outmigration numbers. We’ve got to change that,” Savoie said.

COMMISSIONER ADDRESS EDUCATION/BUSINESS

ADD ONE

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Efforts are underway. Crediting the support of the Governor and Legislature, the Commissioner pointed out that good things are happening in education in Louisiana. “We must continue to support research and look for opportunities to commercialize products, encourage technology transfer and provide for business incubation. We also need graduates who can establish businesses, arrange financing, market products, and develop distribution networks in addition to skilled and competent workers,” Savoie said.

The Commissioner also called for a continued commitment to teacher education reform. “Most importantly, we need competent, caring and qualified teachers for every child in every grade, every year. Teaching might be one of our most important responsibilities because teaching is the profession that makes all other professions possible.”

Savoie’s address kicked off a two-day conference attended by college and university faculty, staff and administrators. The conference theme was “Louisiana Higher Education and Business - Steaming Ahead.”